

# LMH surgery factions remain resolute

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Published: **June 01, 2011 10:00 AM**

More than one year after the operating room closure was first officially aired, opponents in the controversial decision to end surgical services at Lady Minto Hospital are still not budging any ground.

While the Vancouver Island Health Authority has shown no sign of wavering from the recommendation made by Grant Hollett in the Salt Spring Health Review of May 24, 2010, the ad hoc Save Our Surgery Committee has proved no less resolute in its commitment to reverse the order.

New evidence of VIHA's determination came with its long-awaited response to the Capital Regional Hospital District board, which had asked the health authority last November to suspend any changes to the operating room or its equipment and to revisit community concerns. The CRHD had contributed funds toward the capital costs of renovating the operating room a few years earlier.

In a reply dated April 13, 2011 and presented at the May 11 meeting of the Capital Regional District Board, VIHA vice president Bill Boomer states the district's stance with absolute clarity.

"The decision to not continue surgical services at Lady Minto was made following extensive discussions with physicians both on and off the island. Based on clinical input that also considered historical surgical volumes, quality issues and patient safety, VIHA will not be reinstating a full surgical service, although . . . we are maintaining and increasing the number of endoscopies being performed."

Save Our Surgery chair Phyllis Bolton is not ready to surrender the fight, however.

"Anytime anyone writes to them about any facet of the operating room, they just refer to the review," she said of VIHA's strategy.

Along with the island's physicians, the health review and VIHA executives have repeatedly said the majority of stakeholders interviewed supported the hospital closure. But Bolton feels the time has come to reveal who the people interviewed actually were, because she knows of several stakeholder groups who are vocally unhappy about the idea.

CRD director Garth Hendren falls into that camp.

"I've just got to say it's just another nail in the destruction of our community," he said. "I just can't believe them. It speaks nothing to our community needs."

Bolton said a SOS postcard campaign shows wide community agreement with Hendren's dismay. The committee has collected close to 2,000 signatures opposing the surgery closure, which translates to about 25 per cent of the voting public.

Hendren suggested the next step might be to go beyond VIHA and even the new health minister (after a meeting with interim minister Kevin Falcon produced no results).

"Maybe we've got to take it up to see the premier — this is something that they're doing that's not supporting families," Hendren said in reference to Christy Clark's "families first" campaign.

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